



 GREATER
DANDENONG
City of Opportunity



ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

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Acknowledgment of Country

The City of Greater Dandenong acknowledges and pays respects to the Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation, as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters in and around Greater Dandenong. We value and recognise local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, heritage, and connection to land as a proud part of a shared identity for Greater Dandenong. Greater Dandenong City Council pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging and recognises their importance in maintaining knowledge, traditions, and culture in our community. Greater Dandenong City Council also respectfully acknowledges the Bunurong Land Council as the Registered Aboriginal Party responsible for managing the Aboriginal cultural heritage of the land and waters where Greater Dandenong is situated.

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Springvale Community Hub Celebration



Our Great City

Our Great City

Our Great City

Greater Dandenong City Council provides a range of services to improve the quality of life of all residents. Council's vision, strategic objectives and service strategies are outlined in the Council Plan 2021-25 and the Annual Budget. The delivery of services is measured by a set of service performance indicators and measures. These services include:

Children and families	Health and wellbeing	Your home	Sport and leisure	Roads and safety	Community
 Childcare	 Disability services	 Planning permits	 Sportsgrounds	 Roads and footpaths	 Libraries
 Kindergartens	 Home maintenance	 Building permits	 Swimming pools	 Car parks	 Volunteering
 Maternal and child health	 Home and community care	 Pet registrations	 Leisure centres	 Street lighting	 Theatre and the arts
 Playgroups	 Meals on wheels	 Rubbish and recycling	 Parks and gardens	 School crossing supervision	 Grants
 Immunisation	 Food safety	 Graffiti removal	 Festivals and events	 Emergency management	 Community centres

Community Vision 2040

The City of Greater Dandenong is a home to all. It's a city where you can enjoy and embrace life through celebration and equal opportunity.

We harmonise the community by valuing multiculturalism and the individual. Our community is healthy, vibrant, innovative and creative.

Our growing city is committed to environmental sustainability. Welcome to our exciting and peaceful community.

Strategic Objectives

Council's strategic objectives form the Council Plan 2021-25 and reflect the hopes and aspirations of the community as expressed in the community vision and accompanying principles. These objectives are:

- A socially connected, safe and healthy city
- A city that respects and celebrates diversity, our history and the arts
- A city of accessible, vibrant centres and neighbourhoods
- A green city committed to a sustainable future
- A city that supports entrepreneurship, quality education and employment outcomes
- A Council that demonstrates leadership and a commitment to investing in the community

Our Community

97,000 people work within CGD

38,000 families within CGD

50% of people own or are purchasing their **own home**

7% of people live with a severe or profound **disability**

24,000 migrants have arrived since 2014

197 parks

700 hectares of open space

178,000 residents in 2022

2/3 of people are **born overseas**

157 birthplaces

152 playgrounds

3/4 of families have **parents born overseas**

33 bushland areas

1,100 asylum seekers

Manufacturing and Health care and social assistance are the two largest industries



Mayor's Message

The City of Greater Dandenong is a vibrant and diverse place to live, work and play, and despite the challenges of the past two years we have so much to celebrate.

Supporting residents through the continued effects of the pandemic remained a priority for Council and during 2021-22 we administered \$293,236 in material aid to 16 different agencies as part of the State Government Local Partnership Program.

Across 2021 Council consulted with the community and listened to the voice of lived experience to form a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy. The strategy aims to better understand and respond to poverty within our community.

As the most culturally diverse community in Australia, our residents come from all over the world. Greater Dandenong is a proud Refugee Welcome Zone and as a Council we pride ourselves on being a leader in supporting people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. This is why we continued to lead the Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum and endorsed Phase 4 of the Back Your Neighbour campaign.

Council invested \$52 million in capital expenditure, continuing to build on strong investment over the past several years.

Funds were allocated to help with the detailed design and planning works for community connection spaces, including Keysborough South Community Hub development, Dandenong Wellness Centre and the redevelopment of the Noble Park Aquatic Centre – Health and Wellbeing Gymnasium.

Work progressed on the redevelopment of the Masonic Hall for the Dandenong New Art (DNA) Gallery. A time capsule documenting the hall's long and fascinating history was created and the plan is to unearth it on the 50th anniversary of the Gallery's official opening which is scheduled for 2023.

Greater Dandenong is home to a vibrant arts community and many public art projects were unveiled across our suburbs. In December 2021 we launched a new art installation created by students at Dandenong West Primary School. Created in collaboration with well-known illustrator Beci Orpin, the colourful work transformed the Hemmings Street shopping strip.

In 2021 South East Leisure Pty Ltd was formed to manage the four major leisure facilities owned by Council, including Dandenong Oasis, Noble Park Aquatic Centre, Dandenong Stadium and Springers Leisure Centre, and in mid 2022 they were successfully transitioned to the new entity.

While the Springvale Community Hub opened to the public in 2020, we finally got to celebrate the beautiful new precinct with the community through a day of celebration in March 2022. The building has become the new community heart of Springvale, and also received recognition for its design at the 2021 Victorian Architecture Awards, receiving the William Wardell Award for Public Architecture and Award for Urban Design.

Another award connected to the Springvale Community Hub was one received for the Waa and Bulln Bulln Corroboree ceremonial fire pit. This project won the First Nations Community Partnership Initiative Award at the 2022 LGPRO Awards for Excellence.

Noble Park was selected as a location for suburban revitalisation under the Victorian Government's Suburban Revitalisation Program. The Noble Park Revitalisation Board was formed and a number of projects were funded to help unlock Noble Park's full potential and support the social and economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. A total of 21 projects were funded by the Office of Suburban Development.

With an ageing population in Greater Dandenong there is a high demand for qualified community aged care workers. Council partnered with Chisholm Institute to train staff to support their work in Council's Community Care services. In early 2022 we celebrated graduates receiving their Certificate III Individual Support.

Council has 180 volunteers, without whom many of our programs and services could not run. During the past year they have supported various activities, including the Karma Knitting program which created 150 hand-knitted items donated to Cornerstone, CoCO Social Enterprises and Shawlands Caravan Park.

Council proudly celebrates our First Nations peoples and recognises their connection to Country. We continued to build on our relationship with the Bunurong Land Council, the traditional custodians of the land and waters of Greater Dandenong. We launched our second Reconciliation Action Plan and continue to work towards reconciliation with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

While we focus on this year's outcomes, it is also important to look to the future. Following extensive work with the Greater Dandenong People's Panel we adopted the Council Plan 2021-25, which sets out our community's vision for Greater Dandenong.

The Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy and the Greater Dandenong Libraries Strategy 2022-26 were also adopted. A total of 344,323 visitors enjoyed our Greater Dandenong Libraries in this last year. We welcomed 7,499 new members and facilitated 481,220 library loans. Given the COVID-19 restrictions, we recorded 4,772 click and collect pick-ups and 486 free home delivery parcels during lockdowns.

Internally Council adopted our first Gender Equality Action Plan, continuing progress towards equality of opportunity and respect and the creation of a safe, inclusive workplace.

As Mayor of this city, it gives me great pleasure to present the 2021-22 Annual Report. Amidst the challenges of an ongoing global pandemic, we continued to support our residents and look towards a promising future.

I would like to thank our CEO John Bennie who has dedicated the last 16 years to the service of the Greater Dandenong community. His passion and commitment to this municipality is without question and his strong leadership is evident in Council's sound financial position, large capital works program, and community satisfaction results year on year. Myself and my fellow Councillors thank John for his outstanding leadership and wish him all the best for the future.

I would also like to thank my fellow Councillors and Council staff for their ongoing commitment to making Greater Dandenong a welcoming place for all and a real city of opportunity.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Memeti'.

Cr Jim Memeti
Greater Dandenong Mayor

Chief Executive Officer's Report

This Report will be my last as Council's Chief Executive Officer. In the second quarter of the next financial year, I will retire from Council after some 16 years of service – 16 of the most enjoyable and rewarding years of my local government career; 16 years over which I hope, I have made an incremental and constructive contribution to the ongoing growth and development of this outstanding city.

Despite all of the challenges that we continue to face, 2021-22 has been a successful year for Greater Dandenong City Council. This may be hard to comprehend following two years of a COVID-19 pandemic; or, some six years after rate capping was introduced in 2016; or, having dealt with the constructive challenges associated with the development and funding of one of the most ambitious capital programs on record. But Council is dealing with all of these things – it is stable, it is financially sound, it is optimistic and it remains ambitious about doing the very best for the community at large.

Consider *just some* of the diverse achievements generated by Council for the benefit of its community in the last year:

- Endorsement of a new Council Plan and Community Vision
- First deliberative engagement People's Panel
- Development of a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy
- Successful delivery of a range of community funding programs worth \$2 million
- Successful transition to South East Leisure Pty Ltd
- Administration of almost \$300,000 in material aid to 16 agencies as part of the State Government Local Partnership Program
- Launch of the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan
- Continued leadership of the Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum, with Phase 4 of the Back Your Neighbour Campaign endorsed
- \$950,000 received in two grants from Creative Victoria one of which includes funding for design work for the redevelopment of an arts precinct
- Completion of Council's First Gender Equality Action Plan
- Endorsement of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy and Greater Dandenong Libraries Strategy 2022-26

- In partnership with WAYSS and a local philanthropist Council purchased a block of land for construction of social housing for women and families affected by family violence
- COVID-19 relief efforts with food relief activities
- Completion of the Keysborough South Community Hub planning, now due to start construction
- Progression of the detailed design for the new Dandenong Wellbeing Centre
- Completion of renewal projects
- Development and endorsement of the 10-year asset plan, and
- Progression of the master plan for a visionary Foster Street precinct with Development Victoria/ Capital Alliance.

These are just some of the hundreds of outcomes generated in the year that together, confirm Council's commitment to service and to the support of its diverse communities.

In 2016 the State Government imposed rate capping restrictions on local governments. Five successive and cumulative financial years later, Council's capacity to deliver all that is expected of it is now significantly impacted yet Council has still found ways to deliver a complete range of services, invest in new projects, but just as importantly, upgrade and renew existing assets.

Planning for future works, essential upgrades and improvements is most important and some of the projects this year included:

- The long-awaited Keysborough South Community Hub – a project that was progressing to tender towards the end of the year.
- Planning for the significant and essential Dandenong Wellbeing Centre – a full replacement of the Oasis Aquatic Centre.
- Delivery of essential, dry facility upgrades to the Noble Park Aquatic Centre.
- Construction – approaching completion – of the Springvale Boulevard project.
- Completion and full implementation of the Springvale Community Hub project that over successive years delivered an upgraded City Hall, landscaped surrounds and precinct, and a new Library and community meeting spaces.

- In conjunction with the State Government, numerous projects and activities that contribute to the Revitalisation of the Noble Park Activity Centre.

'Community Hubs' have become priority facilities for Council for well over a decade commencing with a very early version at the Paddy O'Donoghue Centre in 2005. Council has progressed to a new Dandenong Civic Centre, precinct and Library in 2014; a Springvale Hub as outlined above was completed in the middle of the pandemic in 2020; an appropriate, localised facility is planned to be completed in Keysborough South in 2023-24; and now, a similar, locally focussed facility is being planned for Dandenong.

This network of community facilities will support a diverse Greater Dandenong community and assist its many endeavours for years to come.

Signature projects – such as those listed and, many others underway or planned – reinforce Greater Dandenong's standing as a prominent city in a developing region that places strong emphasis on quality facilities and places for its community.

Greater Dandenong remains highly regarded, as a constantly evolving city that:

- Increasingly responds to regional needs
- Has principal and neighbourhood activity centres that reflect growing standards of amenity and opportunity
- Is well-served by public transport - but has a backlog of needs
- Has significantly improved infrastructure and assets – that require constant attention
- Is seeking to play its role in responding to climate change and a myriad of environmental challenges, and
- Remains a centre for skills growth and employment in the region.



Sound Financial Management

Despite many ongoing and external challenges, Council's operating result was a surplus of \$33.9 million. It is important to note that these are 'accounting surpluses' which include a range of non-cash items such as depreciation on Council assets, assets written off, assets gifted to Council by developers (eg. roads, footpaths, and open space) and exclude cash costs such as capital expenditure.

Through sound and prudent leadership by Council and management by staff, Council remains in a healthy financial position although it must again be stated, that this will be tested into the future – as we have been in the past – by the compounding effect of rate capping; by the impacts of two years of COVID-19; and, by the need to source, fund and service, the capital costs of a highly ambitious capital program outlined in this report.

Despite these obvious challenges, Council remains focused on its purpose and objective – to provide quality services and assets to the people and businesses of this city. Council will not allow its ambitions to be compromised, its optimism to be dampened, or its hard earned and sound financial position to be unreasonably impacted by externalities.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Capital Improvements

\$52.0 million was spent on capital improvements during the year, \$16.5 million of that amount was expended on asset renewals with a further \$19.2 million on upgrades to existing infrastructure assets.

It is pleasing to report that the funding of basic infrastructure – roads, footpaths, and drains in this last year, was maintained at \$14.1 million. This investment continues to underpin the importance of Council's maintenance and protection of existing assets.

2021–22 was by any measure, another successful year for Council, continuing a strong commitment to community facilities providing more than 140 services through the planning and implementation of those already mentioned but also through improvements that provide greater access and opportunity for women, children, people with a disability, our extensive CALD community, visitors and pets and fauna that round out our entire 'community'.

I commend the Council on its leadership and achievements in this last year; I thank the many wonderful staff who remain committed to local government service; and finally, thank Council and the people of Greater Dandenong for the privilege and opportunity to have served as your CEO – I wish you all the very best for the future.



John Bennie PSM
Chief Executive Officer